

Situations and procedures

Referendum on independence for Scotland 2014

The designation process

This document is for campaigners, who want to know more about the designation process for lead campaigners at the referendum on independence for Scotland.

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Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Electoral Commission:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk

Terms and expressions we use

We use 'must' when we refer to a specific legal or regulatory requirement. We use 'should' for items we consider to be minimum good practice, but which are not legal requirements.

You do not have to follow this guidance, but if you do, you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law.

Our approach to enforcement

The Commission regulates political funding and spending. We are committed to providing those we regulate with a clear understanding of their regulatory obligations through our guidance documents and advice service. If you are unsure of how any of the rules apply to you, please call us for advice. We are happy to help, so please get in touch.

Wherever possible, we use advice and guidance proactively in order to secure compliance. And we regulate in a way that is effective, proportionate and fair.

If you do not comply with legal or regulatory requirements you or your organisation may be subject to civil or criminal sanctions. You can find more information about the Commission's approach to enforcement at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/enforcement

The designation process

Who this document is for:

Registered referendum campaigners who want to know more about the process of designating lead campaign groups at the referendum on independence for Scotland.

The document covers:

- How lead campaign groups are designated
- The application period
- The designation period and processes
- Designated lead campaign group benefits

Related documents:

- [Overview of referendum campaigns](#)
- [Overview of referendum spending](#)
- [Situations and procedures – The referendum on independence for Scotland 2014](#)

Forms and explanations

- [Form RIS1 – Application to register as a campaigner in a referendum](#)
- [Form RIS2 - Application for lead campaign group status](#)

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Summary

Under the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013, the Electoral Commission can appoint lead campaign groups on each side in a referendum campaign.

Registered campaigners can apply to be designated lead campaign groups.

This document sets out the principles of designation and gives an overview of the designation decision process .

What are designated lead campaign groups?

During a referendum, registered referendum campaigners can apply to become lead campaign groups.

One lead campaign group (also called a designated organisation) represents each side of the referendum debate. They act as the lead campaign group on behalf of those campaigning for that outcome.

Lead campaign groups have certain benefits over other registered campaigners. For example, they have a higher spending limit than other registered campaigners.

We welcome all applications, including those from umbrella organisations formed by campaign groups working together. We must make sure that the lead campaign groups adequately represent those campaigning for each outcome.

How are lead campaign groups designated?

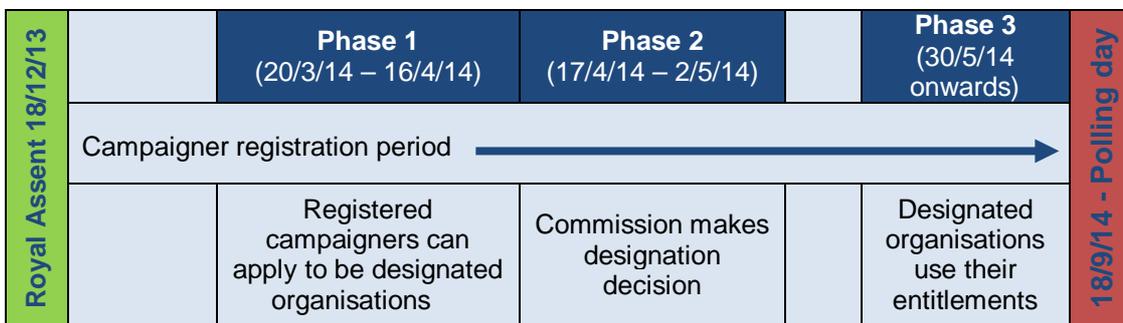
Under the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013, registered campaigners apply to us, to become a lead campaign group. We will then designate the applicants who adequately represent those supporting their chosen referendum outcome.

At the referendum on independence for Scotland we can designate lead campaign groups on both sides of the debate or for one side only. If we consider that none of the applicants adequately represent those supporting a particular outcome, we cannot designate a lead campaign group.

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The lead campaign designation overview

The chart below shows an overview of the lead campaign designation process. This consists of the application period, a designation period and a final campaign period before the poll.



The application period

During the application period, any referendum campaigner who has registered with us can apply to be a lead campaign group.

Important

Only registered campaigners can apply to be lead campaign groups.

When does the application period begin?

The application period for designation runs for 28 days from Thursday 20 March to Wednesday 16 April 2014. We then have 16 days to make our decision on designation between 17 April and 2 May. We will make our decision by 2 May.

Please see our guidance on the [referendum on independence for Scotland](#) for the full timetable.

How do you apply to be a lead campaign group?

Registered campaigners can apply to be a lead campaign group by sending us a completed [Form RIS2 - Application for lead campaign group status](#).

Please read the form carefully to make sure you provide us with all the information we need. We recommend that you provide the following:

- details of the organisations which support your application
- how you will make sure your campaign reaches voters across the Scotland
- your financial strategy
- how you plan to represent other campaigners for the same outcome

When we have made our decision, we will publish all applications, in the interests of transparency. However, we will not publish personal contact details or sensitive information about your campaign plan and strategy.

You cannot apply for designation online

A Word version of the application form is available [here](#)

The designation period

During the designation period, we assess the applicants to decide if we can designate lead campaign groups.

We have to do this within 16 days of the close of applications.

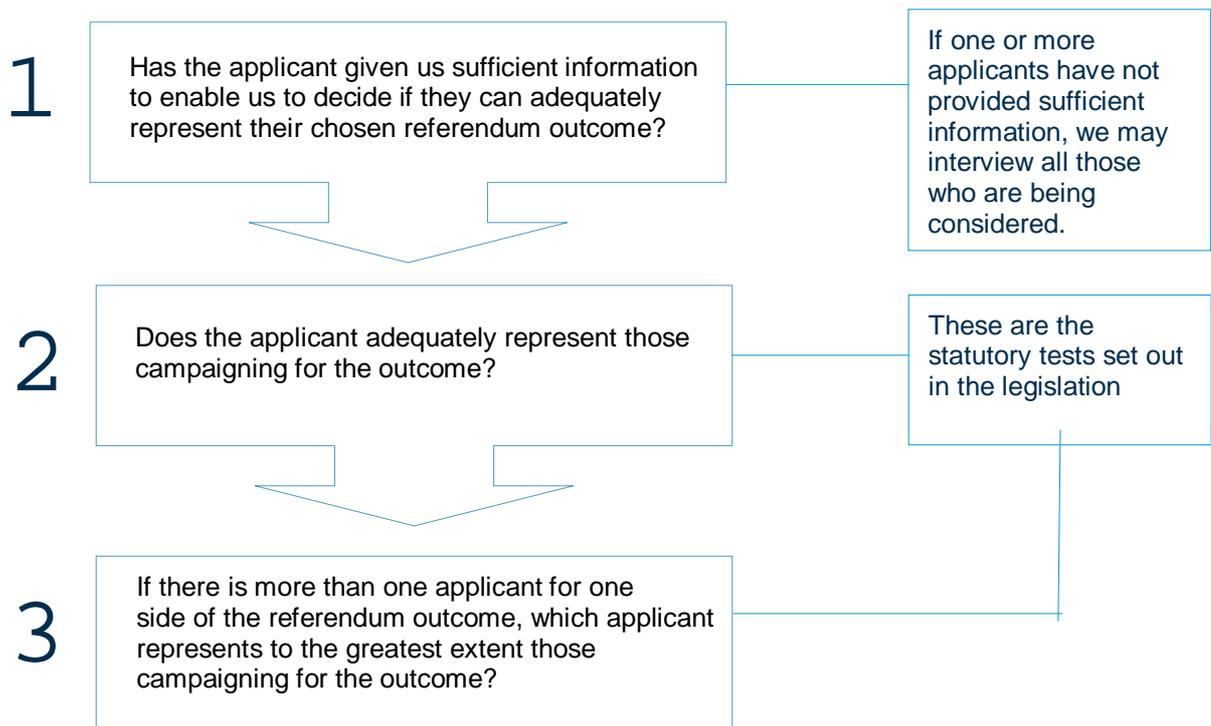
How is the designation decision made?

The Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013 sets out the test that we must apply to applications. We use a three-stage decision making process to apply the test, as shown below. This helps us decide if each applicant is capable of being a lead campaign group and which applicant adequately represents those campaigning for the referendum outcomes.

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The three-stage decision process

The stages are:



The statutory tests

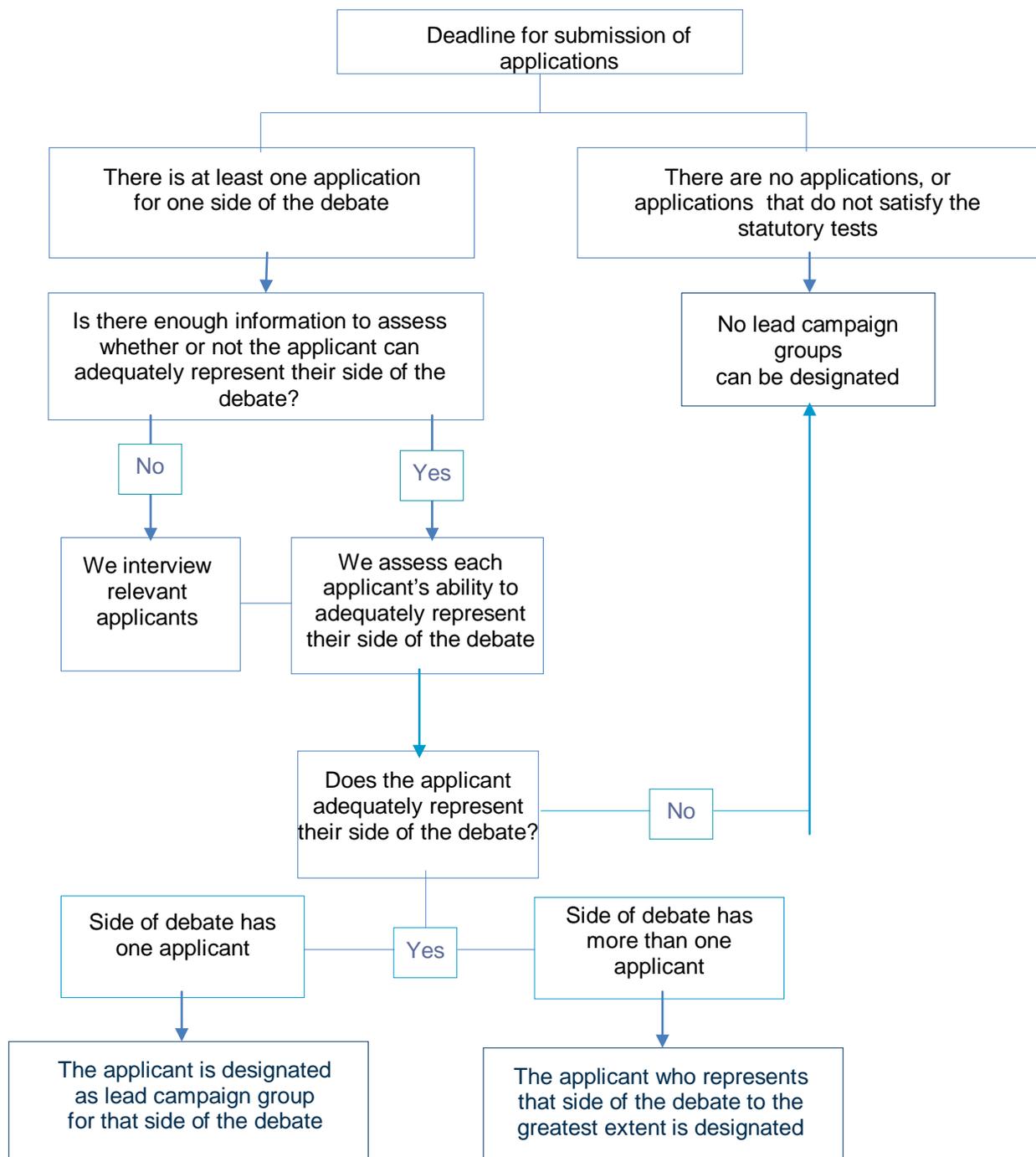
Under the Scottish Independence Referendum Act 2013, we must apply statutory tests when designating lead campaign groups.

For the referendum on independence for Scotland we can designate for each side of the debate or on one side of the debate only. We cannot designate lead campaign groups if:

- there are no applicants for an outcome, or
- we consider that no applicants adequately represent those campaigning for an outcome

If we are satisfied that an applicant can adequately represent one side of the outcome only (for example 'yes'), we must designate.

An overview of the designation decision process



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The referendum period

During the referendum period, designated lead campaign groups have a higher spending limit of £1,500,000 million.

Lead campaign groups also have other benefits available to them. These benefits are used to inform voters about the arguments.

Lead campaign group benefits

The benefits for lead campaign groups are:

- A higher spending limit than other registered campaigners
- Free distribution of their information to electors
- Referendum campaign broadcasts
- Free use of certain public rooms

We will work with the designated lead campaign groups to help them access these benefits.

See the following guidance for more information:

- [Overview of referendum campaigns](#)
- [Overview of referendum spending](#)

How we can help

You can find more information in the guidance documents we have suggested in this document, or you can view our full range of guidance and up-to-date resources on our website.

If it's easier, you can also contact us on the phone number or email address below. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

Call us on:

0131 225 0202

scotreferendum@electoralcommission.org.uk

Visit us at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

We welcome feedback on our guidance – just email us at:

info@electoralcommission.org.uk