ELECTIONS BC
A non-partisan Office of the Legislature

HANDBOOK FOR LOCAL CANDIDATES

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INTRODUCTION

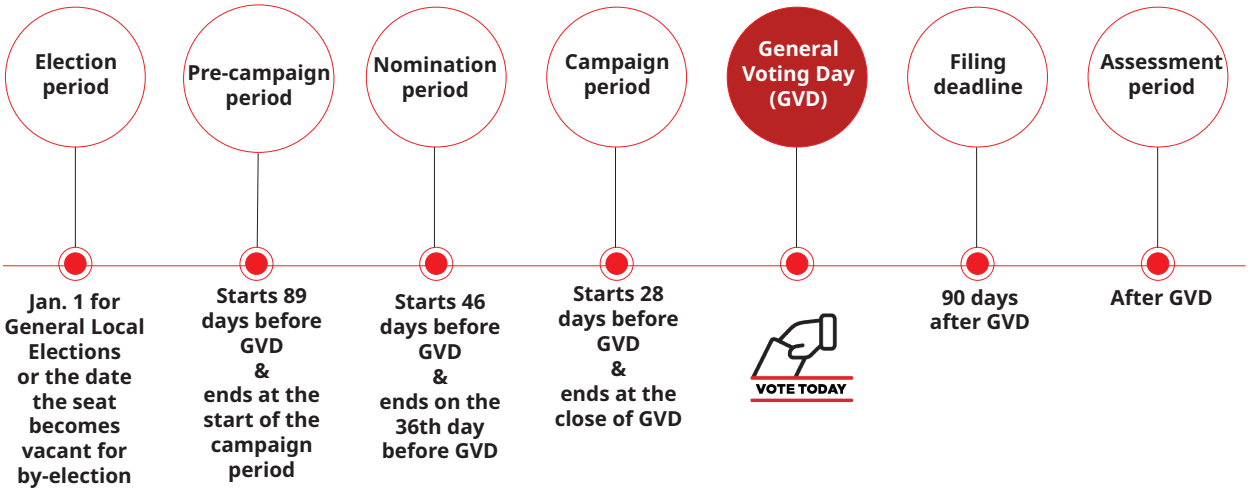
This handbook is designed as a day-to-day resource to help local candidates understand their campaign responsibilities under the *Local Elections Campaign Financing Act* (LECFA) and associated regulations. It is the responsibility of candidates to ensure they understand and follow the rules. This guide is based on current interpretation of the legislation and is not considered legal advice by Elections BC.

Each section is designed to address common issues candidates may encounter during local elections. We recommend this resource be used in collaboration with other Elections BC resources available on our website (elections.bc.ca/local-candidates), including:

- Local guides
- Local forms
- Online learning
- Information sessions

Where there is inconsistency between this handbook and the legislation, the legislation will prevail. If an interpretation of specific circumstances is required, you may wish to consider seeking independent legal advice.

TIMELINES



Key dates	Period	Important to know
Election period	Starts January 1st in the year for General Local Elections, or for a by-election, from the date the seat becomes vacant, until the start of the campaign period	• Candidates are required to appoint a financial agent and open a campaign account. • There are rules for campaign contributions that candidates must follow. • All income and expenses must be recorded and receipts maintained.
Pre-campaign period	Starts 89 days before General Voting Day (GVD) and ends at the start of campaign period Only applicable for General Local Elections (not applicable for by-elections)	• There are rules for election advertising, including a requirement for an authorization statement on all advertising. • All income and expenses must be recorded and receipts maintained.
Nomination period	Starts 46 days before GVD and ends on the 36th day before GVD	• Elections BC does not administer candidate nominations for local candidates. • Candidate nominations, including elector organization endorsements, must be filed with Local Chief Election Officers directly.

Campaign period	Starts 28 days before GVD and ends at the close of general voting	• There are rules for election advertising, which now also include advertising that takes a position on an election issue. • All income and expenses must be recorded and receipts maintained.
General Voting Day (GVD) 		• No election advertising can be transmitted to the public. • During voting, candidates **must not** post, display, or distribute election advertising or materials identifying a candidate or an elector organization within 100 metres of a voting place.
Filing deadline	90 days after GVD	• All candidates **must** file a campaign financing report with Elections BC.
Assessment period	After GVD	• Elections BC conducts compliance reviews and audits. Issues of non-compliance are forwarded to investigations for possible enforcement. • Candidates **must** respond to requests from Elections BC for additional information.

RUNNING AS A CANDIDATE



Individuals can run as:

- unendorsed candidates (candidates who are not supported by an elector organization), or
- endorsed candidates (candidates who are supported by an electoral organization).

There are some important differences if running as an endorsed candidate and they are highlighted through this booklet. Check page 11 for endorsed candidates expense limits.

FINANCIAL AGENTS

All candidates **must** have a financial agent. Candidates may appoint another individual to act as their financial agent.



A candidate is automatically their own financial agent if they do not appoint anyone.

The appointment must be made in writing.

Appointment of financial agent checklist:

- ☐ Full name
- ☐ Start date of the appointment
- ☐ Contact information for financial agent, including service address
- ☐ Signatures of the candidate and financial agent

Appointment forms, including updates, must be sent to the relevant authorities as soon as practicable:

- **before** the voting results are declared, to the **Local Chief Election Officer** for your jurisdiction, or
- **after** voting results are declared, to **Elections BC.**

What to look for in a financial agent?

A background in accounting or finance can be an advantage for financial agents, but it is not a requirement under LECFA.

An individual can be appointed as the financial agent for more than one campaign, however, they should ensure they have the time and resources available to meet the responsibilities they have committed to.

Financial agent duties

Financial agents are legally responsible for managing the campaign's finances.

Failure to manage the campaign finances and follow LECFA can result in significant penalties.

If a candidate does not appoint a financial agent, they are responsible for all the financial agent's duties.

Duties include:

1. **Open and manage a separate campaign bank account that is used exclusively for the candidate's election campaign.**

   The account must be in the name of the candidate's campaign. This means it includes the candidate's name and details about the specific election. A campaign account must be opened prior to incurring election expenses or accepting campaign contributions.

Acceptable account name	Not acceptable account name
• Alex Smith 2026 Vancouver Local Election Campaign Account • Vancouver by-election for Alex Smith	• Vancouver Election Account • Alex's Vancouver account

2 Accept and record all income.*

- Contributions must come from eligible individuals, who are:
  - residents of British Columbia, and
  - Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

  Note: Record all required information for contributions and ensure individuals do not exceed the annual contribution limit. Required information listed on page 8.
- Contributions from organizations or individuals residing outside of B.C. cannot be accepted.
- In addition to contributions, all other income must be tracked, deposited into the campaign account and disclosed in the campaign financing report.



If running as an endorsed candidate, contribution limits are shared with the elector organization and all candidates endorsed by the elector organization for the same election campaign. This means an individual can give the maximum amount to the electoral organization and not to each individual candidate.

3 Approve expenses.*

- Approve all expenses incurred by the campaign.
- Ensure all election expenses are paid or reimbursed directly from the campaign account.
- Ensure campaign period election expenses do not exceed the expense limit.
- Maintain accurate and complete records of all campaign expenses.
- Ensure that all campaign expenses are disclosed in the campaign financing report.

What does it mean to incur an election expense?

Expenses are considered to be incurred once the property or service is used in such a manner that the value is an election expense.

Example: *Candidate Alex Smith purchases $1,000 worth of signs during the pre-campaign period. These signs are displayed in the campaign period. The full $1,000 cost of the signs must be reported as a campaign period expense and will count towards the expense limit.*

For more information, please scan this code and review the election expense limit quick reference sheet.

***** Financial agents may authorize someone to assist with accepting contributions and incurring expenses. The authorization must be in writing and kept as an official record.

4 File campaign financing reports with Elections BC by the filing deadline.

- The financing report must be submitted within 90 days after GVD.
- Amended reports must be submitted within 30 days of becoming aware of errors or omissions in the report.

5 Maintain financial records in B.C.

- The financial agent must retain the financial records until all required campaign financing reports have been submitted.
- Afterwards, the financial records must be forwarded to the candidate, who must retain them for five years after GVD.

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions include any amount of money, property, or services provided without compensation to a candidate for campaign use.

For more information about contributions, including the current contribution limit, scan the code and see (elections.bc.ca/local-contributions).

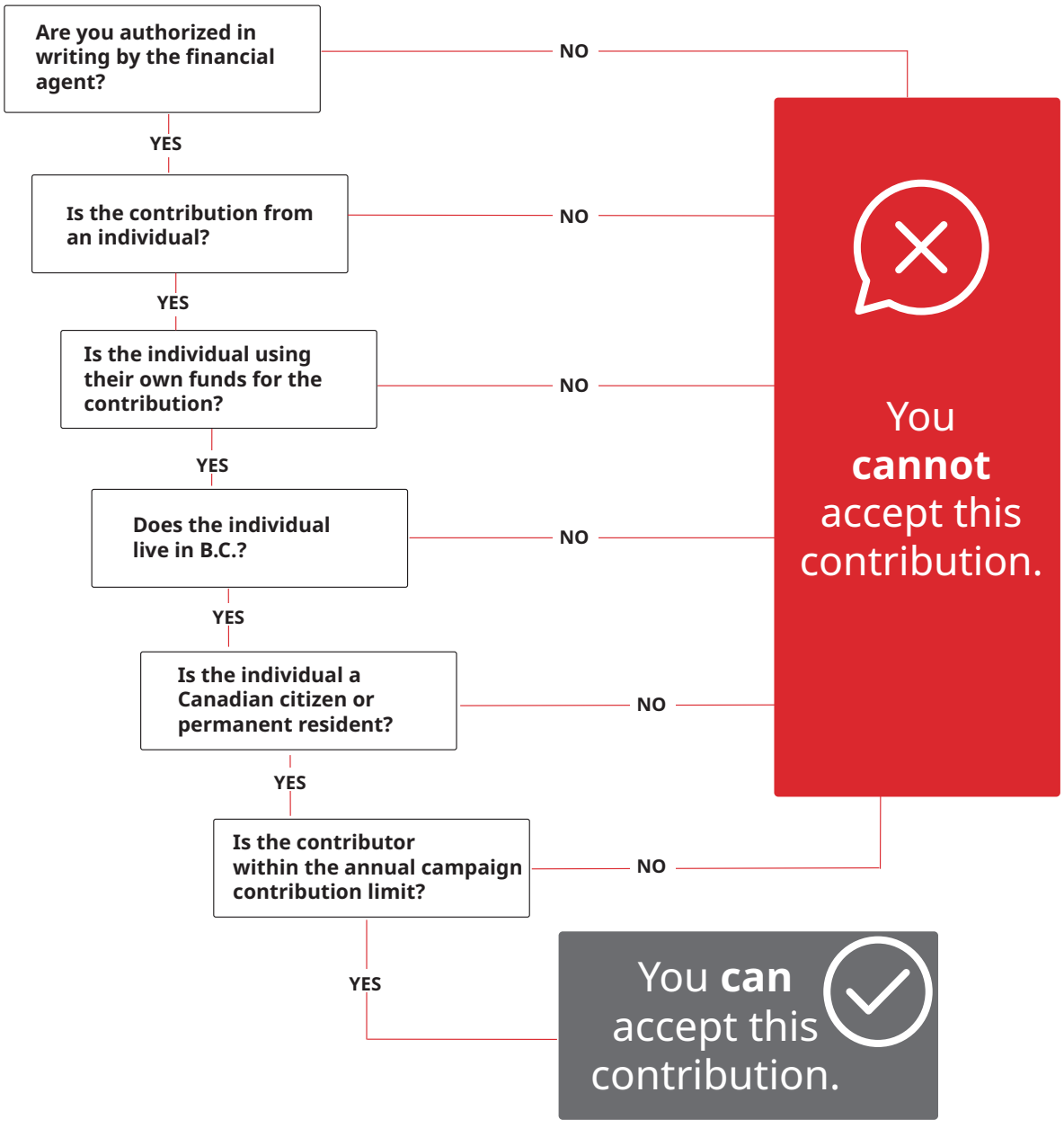
Who can contribute?	• Individuals who live in B.C. and are either a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident
What are contribution limits?	• $1,429.70 for 2026 • Updated January 1st each year
What counts as a contribution?	• Cash, cheque, credit card payments, and electronic fund transfers • Property or services provided free of charge which would normally have a cost • Discounts, forgiven loans or unpaid debts
What needs to be recorded when accepting contributions?	• Contributor's full name • Contributor's mailing address • If different, contributor's residential address • Amount of contribution • Date received • How eligibility was confirmed

If using an online processing system (such as Stripe, Square, etc), the contribution amount includes any service fees withheld by the processing system.

If an individual contributes $1,420 and the system retains $2.50 as a processing fee, the contribution amount is still $1,420, despite the campaign receiving only $1,417.50.

Accepting contributions

Candidates, financial agents, and appointed individuals must ensure that a contribution is permitted before accepting it. This flow chart will help to determine when contributions can and cannot be accepted.



Prohibited Contributions

It is an offence to make or accept a prohibited contribution and Elections BC may issue monetary penalties for such contraventions. If you unintentionally accept a prohibited contribution, you must return it as soon as you realize the error. Failing to return a prohibited contribution can result in significant penalties.

Prohibited contribution checklist:

- ☐ Return the contribution to the contributor within 30 days of becoming aware. If the amount cannot be returned, remit it to Elections BC as soon as practicable.
- ☐ Record the details of how the contribution was dealt with as part of the campaign's financial records, including any supporting documentation (i.e. cancelled cheque, etc.).
- ☐ Report the prohibited contribution to Elections BC in your campaign financing report.



When returning a prohibited contribution, you should keep all supporting documentation about the return.

This includes the amount returned and the date it was returned to the contributor. If the contributor does not cash the cheque for the returned contribution, you must remit the contibution to Elections BC.



Individuals must use their own funds to make a political contribution. This means that the bank account or credit card used for the contribution must be in their own name. If the account is in another individual's name, the contribution is an indirect contribution which is prohibited.

Example: *A group of three supporters wish to make campaign contributions, but only one person brought their chequebook. That supporter writes one cheque for $3,000 and writes that it is on behalf of all three of them in the memo line, and the other supporters agree to pay them back. This is a prohibited contribution because the other supporters did not use their own funds for the contribution.*

ELECTION EXPENSES

Candidates are limited in the amount of election expense they can use during the campaign period. Current expense limits are posted on our website (elections.bc.ca/local-expense-limits).

Endorsed candidates may have a reduced expense limit if they have chosen to share some of their limit with their elector organization through a Campaign Financing Arrangement (CFA). There are significant penalties for exceeding an election expense limit or amount available under a CFA.

The following election expenses are not subject to the campaign period expense limits:

- Personal expenses
- Legal or accounting services
- Services provided by a financial agent
- Interest on a permissible loan for election expense

There are no expense limits for property or services used exclusively outside of the campaign period.

All election expenses must be tracked. Record keeping must include:

- ☐ Description of the election expense
- ☐ Total value of each election expense
- ☐ Date the election expense was incurred, including when it was used by the campaign

Supporting documents (e.g. receipts, invoices, etc.) must be retained for five years to support campaign record keeping.

Incurring election expenses

Election expenses are incurred based on when the property or services are used. This means that you might pay for an expense before the expense is considered to be incurred.



How to calculate election expenses?

Election expenses must include all production and transmission costs, and applicable taxes.

Example: *Candidate Alex Smith pays $2,000 to have a video produced during the pre-campaign period. This video is not shared until the campaign period. During the campaign period, Alex Smith pays $100 to share the video with the public. In this scenario the candidate must report $2,100 towards their election expense limit.*

It is important to report expenses during the period they are used. Failure to report expenses in the right period may result in unintentionally exceeding the campaign period expense limit and being disqualified from the election.



Apportioning election expenses

Some election expenses can be split between two periods – this is called apportioning expenses. This can only be done when some of the value is used in the campaign period and some of the value is used outside of the campaign period.

For example, if you pay for a monthly phone bill, you can split the cost by month. However, you can't split the usage of campaign signs. If a campaign sign is publicly displayed starting in the pre-campaign period, and remains during the campaign period, the entire value of the sign must be counted against the campaign period expense limit (as the full value was transmitted during the campaign period).

MARKET VALUE

Candidates need to record and report transactions that do not involve money, for example, property or services donated and/or used by the campaign. To do this, they must assign a market value.

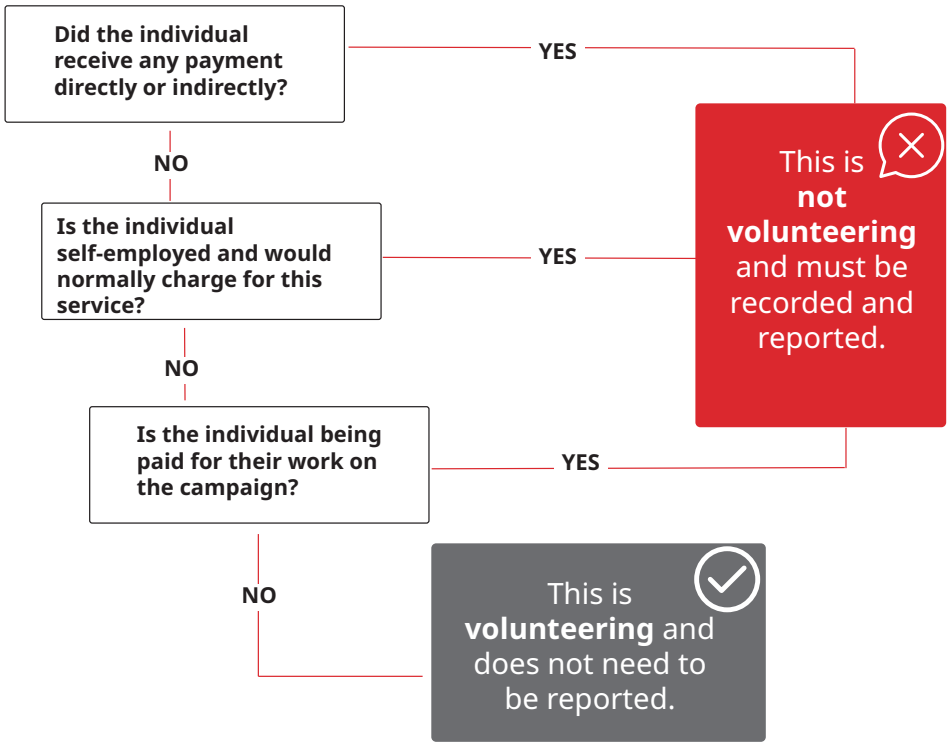
Market value is the lowest price charged for an equivalent property or service in the area at the time. This can be determined by obtaining quotes or estimates online or from local vendors for similar products.

The supporting documentations showing how market value was determined must be retained as part of the financial records.

Example: *Eligible individuals can give non-monetary contributions, including services or property, or provide discounts to a candidate. The* ***difference between market value and the price paid*** *is a non-monetary contribution. The full market value of the property or services used is the amount of the election expense incurred. This amount must be recorded and disclosed in the same way as contributions of money and election expenses purchased by the campaign.*

VOLUNTEERING

Individuals are allowed to volunteer for a campaign, however, in some cases their services may be a contribution and election expense under LECFA. This flow chart helps to determine when an individual's participation must be reported as a contribution and expense.



ELECTION ADVERTISING

Election advertising includes any paid public transmission, including canvassing voters, that promotes or opposes the election of a candidate or an elector organization during the pre-campaign period or campaign period.

- During the campaign period, election advertising also includes messages that take a position on an issue with which a candidate or elector organization are associated.
- LECFA does not regulate when a candidate can start advertising, or where they can place signs. Candidates should contact their local authority as there may be specific by-laws regulating election advertising.
- If someone other than a candidate or elector organization wants to conduct election advertising, they must register as a third party sponsor with Elections BC. They must be independent from the election campaign of any candidate or elector organization.

When candidates are conducting election advertising, the message must include sponsorship information that:

- indicates the ad is authorized by the financial agent,
- includes the name of the financial agent, and
- provides a B.C. phone number, B.C. mailing address or email address where the financial agent can be contacted about the advertising.

Acceptable sponsorship information	Not acceptable sponsorship information
• Authorized by Alex Smith, financial agent, 604-555-1234	• Paid for by Alex Smith's campaign • Authorized advertising, www.AlexSmith.com

- If multiple candidates conduct advertising together, or with their elector organization, each participant is responsible for paying for their share of the advertising. Furthermore, the advertising authorization statement must identify and provide contact information for all authorized financial agents.

Advertising must not be transmitted on General Voting Day, unless it is one of the following activities and is conducted more than 100 metres from a voting place:

- Signs, posters, and banners
- Distribution of pamphlets
- Internet message posted before GVD, which are not changed before the close of voting
- Message with the sole purpose of encouraging voters to vote

Elections BC does not regulate the placement of election advertising. Candidates are encouraged to contact the local authority to confirm if there are rules for election signs, and to confirm the location of voting places.

If contacting voters by phone, please be aware of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) rules for unsolicited calling, including do not call lists, identification requirements and automatic dialing-announcing device (ADAD) rules. More information is available on the CRTC website (https://crtc.gc.ca).

CAMPAIGN FINANCING REPORTS

Every candidate must file a campaign financing report with Elections BC within 90 days of GVD, even if they are acclaimed, withdraw or have no financial activity to report.

The report consists of the following forms which are available on the Elections BC website (elections.bc.ca/local-forms).

- Disclosure Statement Cover Page
- Campaign Financing Summary
- Summary of Campaign Contributions
- Campaign Contributions With a Total Value of $100 or More
- Permissible Loans Received
- Other Income and Transfers Received
- Prohibited Campaign Contributions and Loans
- Summary of Elections Expenses
- Shared Election Expenses
- Other Expenses and Transfers Given
- Fundraising Functions
- Disbursement of Surplus Funds
- Former Financial Agents
- Campaign Financing Arrangement

If a candidate has no financial activity to report, this can be indicated on the cover page. The remaining forms only need to be filed if there is financial information that needs to be reported.

To be accepted, the campaign financing report must be:

- received by Elections BC by the filing deadline (postmark is not acceptable) – contact information is included in this handbook.
- signed by both the candidate and the financial agent.



Submitting reports

Candidates can submit reports online, by email, mail, fax, courier, or in-person. To meet the deadline, we recommend using the **Secure Online Filing Application (SOFA).**

Scanned reports or electronically filled forms can be directly uploaded to SOFA through Elections BC Services (https://services.electionsbc.gov.bc.ca/Portal).

ONGOING EDUCATION

As you run your campaign, there are a variety of resources available at elections.bc.ca/local-candidates. These materials are designed to guide your campaign, deepen your understanding of the rules, and help you approach your campaign responsibilities with knowledge and confidence.

Be sure to visit the candidate homepage regularly. It serves as a central hub for updates, reminders, announcements, and additional educational materials. Checking in often will ensure you stay informed at every stage of the campaign.

QUESTIONS?

For more information:

Phone toll-free	1-800-661-8683

Or contact Elections BC at:

Mailing address	PO Box 9275 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9J6
Phone	250-387-5305
Fax	250-387-3578
Toll-free fax	1-866-466-0665
Email	electoral.finance@elections.bc.ca
Website	elections.bc.ca

NOTES



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