

Expression of interest (EOI) request for The Electoral Commission

Contract Reference: WP132

Democratic Engagement Projects: engaging under-registered groups in democracy

Procedure: Open Procedure (Procurement Act 2023)

Contract dates (estimated):

Lots 1-3:

- Year 1: February 2026 – August 2026
- Year 2: September 2026 – August 2027
- Possible extension to March 2030, subject to yearly budget approval

Lot 4:

- Year 1: February 2026 – August 2026

Budget (incl. VAT):

- Lot 1 (Action research projects in England): Up to **£65,000** per project will be awarded in year 1 of the contract. The budget for year 2 will be confirmed in April 2026
- Lot 2 (Accessible voting projects): Up to **£60,000** per project will be awarded in year 1 of the contract. The budget for year 2 will be confirmed in April 2026
- Lot 3 (Digital engagement projects): Up to **£100,000** per project will be awarded in year 1 of the contract. The budget for year 2 will be confirmed in April 2026
- Lot 4 (Action research projects in Scotland): Up to **£12,500** per project will be awarded.

Expression of Interest (EOI) scope

The Electoral Commission requires information on your capability and capacity to provide the services detailed below.

Please advise if you are interested in bidding for this opportunity. Instructions on how to do this can be found under '[Next steps](#)' below.

Please note: No formal tender response is required at this stage, either as a project proposal or as a price submission.

Intended Procurement timetable

Please note that this is a provisional timetable and we reserve the right to deviate from it:

- Publication of EOI: 19 November 2025
- Return date for EOI: 11 December 2025
- Invitation to Tender issued: 15 December 2025
- Clarification question deadline: 12 January 2026
- **Tender submission date deadline: 16 January 2026**
- Contracts awarded and all bidders notified: 9 February 2026

The Electoral Commission and its voter education work

The Electoral Commission is the independent public body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity.

We also use our expertise to make and advocate for changes to our democracy, aiming to improve fairness, transparency, and efficiency.

Our voter education work aims to promote greater consistency in political literacy education, increase knowledge and understanding of democracy, and increase voter confidence to engage in our democratic system.

To date, we have worked with partners to develop and deliver a range of activities and resources designed to educate voters, particularly under-registered groups and others facing barriers to participation, about how to register to vote, ways to vote and changes to elections (such as the introduction of the voter ID requirement).

Who can apply

- We will commission organisations to develop and evaluate projects that will increase democratic participation.
- Joint applications from multiple organisations and/or membership organisations or umbrella bodies will be accepted providing there is a lead applicant.
- This call is intended for organisations with a proven track record of delivering community or democratic engagement activities. While we welcome diverse expertise, applications from organisations whose primary focus is academic research, consultancy or market analysis are discouraged unless they are part of a joint bid led by an organisation with the required experience.

- Impartiality is at the centre of the Electoral Commission's role. Organisations are required to meet our impartiality requirements before a contract can be awarded. Further due diligence will be carried out on the organisation, trustees and senior leadership prior to any contract being awarded.
- All funding provided must be invested in the project.

We will commission organisations which can use their knowledge and experience of engaging under-registered groups. We intend to work with organisations that embed participatory approaches, such as co-creation and co-design. Successful organisations will ensure their projects are developed with meaningful involvement from the communities they will benefit.

Purpose

The Electoral Commission will support projects that increase participants' ability to, and likelihood of, participating in democracy.

Projects should explore a range of topics based on what is important to their audiences, such as:

- Registering to vote
- The voter ID requirement
- Ways to vote
- How to identify mis- and disinformation
- What to expect at the polling station
- Upcoming changes to elections

We will work in partnership with commissioned organisations to determine what success looks like and how we measure impact.

Scope

We will commission projects which aim to increase democratic participation among groups who are less likely to be registered to vote and those who face other barriers. More information on these groups can be found in [Appendix I](#).

We welcome a wide range of initiatives. We will encourage innovation and creativity from partners, while incorporating best practice in education and community engagement. Initiatives could include traditional education interventions, activities to upskill professionals and trusted community voices, initiatives to build capacity to deliver democratic engagement, events, tech-based solutions, and awareness raising activities.

Projects should aim to achieve the outcomes for the relevant Lot, set out below. We will work in partnership with commissioned organisations to determine what success looks like and how we measure impact.

Lot 1 - Democratic Engagement Projects (England)

Small to medium scale projects with proven impact in England only

We anticipate awarding up to **£65,000** (including VAT) per project to organisations in England who want to pilot new and innovative approaches to democratic engagement.

Projects commissioned under this Lot should aim to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

1. An increase in understanding and knowledge of democracy, voting and elections
2. An increase in confidence to engage in democracy
3. An increase in the likelihood of registering to vote and engaging in democracy

These projects will help us further understand the compounding barriers that under-registered groups face when engaging with our democratic process, and what forms of intervention can remove those barriers.

Lot 2 – Accessible Voting Projects

Medium to large scale projects to provide accessible information to disabled and neurodivergent voters

We anticipate awarding up to **£60,000** per project to organisations who can support disabled and neurodivergent voters across the UK by:

- Working together to coordinate the co-creation, delivery and evaluation of high quality, accessible voter education activities and resources. We welcome applications from partners who can produce voter information in accessible formats including information in Braille, British Sign Language (BSL), Braille, audio, large print and Easy Read.
- Disseminating resources and information to disabled voters through new and existing networks

Between them, these projects will particularly support voters who:

- are D/deaf or hard of hearing
- are blind or partially sighted
- have a learning disability and/or autism

We will also consider applications for projects to support other Disabled people, including with complex or multiple disabilities, and people with a mental illness.

Projects commissioned under this Lot should aim to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

1. Increased access to accessible voter information
2. Increased understanding and knowledge of democracy, voting and elections.
3. An increase in confidence to engage in democracy
4. An increase in the likelihood of participation in elections

Lot 3 – Digital Engagement Projects

Large scale digital engagement projects that inform, educate and inspire voters of all ages, especially those less likely to engage with traditional channels.

We anticipate awarding up to **£100,000** per project to organisations to deliver a range of digital engagement activities.

We are looking for projects that:

- reach new audiences across the UK and fill key information gaps about voting and democracy
- use new technologies and forward-thinking approaches to engage people in the democratic process
- are innovative, inclusive and impactful in helping people understand democracy, elections and voting

We are keen to collaborate with organisations who can combine their reach, creativity and trusted voice with our impartial expertise in democracy, voting and elections. Projects will engage new and diverse audiences and explore the role that digital engagement can have in increasing participation.

Projects commissioned under this Lot should aim to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

1. Increased reach of the Commission's social media channels and traffic to its website
2. Increased access to accurate, impartial and relevant voter information
3. Increased awareness of upcoming elections and upcoming changes to our electoral system

Lot 4 - Democratic Engagement Projects (Scotland)

Small to medium scale projects with proven impact in Scotland only

We anticipate awarding up to **£12,500** (including VAT) per project to organisations in Scotland who want to pilot new and innovative approaches to democratic engagement.

Projects commissioned under this Lot should aim to achieve one or more of the following outcomes:

1. An increase in understanding and knowledge of democracy, voting and elections
2. An increase in confidence to engage in democracy
3. An increase in the likelihood of registering to vote and engaging in democracy

These projects will help us further understand the compounding barriers that under-registered groups face when engaging with our democratic process, and what forms of intervention can remove those barriers.

Indicative evaluation criteria

- **All Lots** - any resultant tenders will be evaluated using the following criteria:
 - **Ability to deliver outcomes (50%)**
 - **Impact and evaluation (20%)**
 - **Timescales and budget (20%)**
 - **Safeguarding practices (10%)**

Please note that the evaluation criteria are subject to change during the development of the Invitation to Tender.

Right to cancel or vary expression on interest

The Electoral Commission reserves the right to:

- Cancel all or part of this EOI at any stage and at any time; and
- Amend, clarify, add to or withdraw all or any part of the EOI at any time.

Next steps

If you are interested in applying for this tender, please register your interest.

1. Register on the portal

The expected invitation to tender will be published on the Electoral Commission's Procurement Portal, please register as a supplier by following this link <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/electoralcommission>

If you need help with registering, please may you contact the In-tend Technical Helpdesk on 0114 407 0065.

2. Contact procurement, register interest

Once you have registered on the portal, please contact us stating which lot/s you intend on applying for. There is no need to formally respond to the tender at this stage with an application.

To express interest, please:

1. Register on the Electoral Commission's In-Tend Procurement Portal
2. Email procurement@electoralcommission.org.uk with confirmation of interest. Please include 'WP132 Democratic Engagement Projects 2025-30' in the subject line.

Contact details

Name: The Electoral Commission - Procurement Team

Email address: procurement@electoralcommission.org.uk

Appendix I: Under-registered groups and those facing other barriers to participation

Under-registered groups

Our [research \(2022\)](#) has demonstrated there are lots of factors which affect whether someone is registered to vote, from age to how long they have lived in their home. Our research shows that the following characteristics impact a person’s likelihood of being registered.

Where the figures below refer to voters in England, they refer to the percentage of people in England who were on the register for UK Parliamentary elections.

Where the figures refer to voters in Scotland, they refer to the percentage of people who were on the register for local elections in Scotland.

Where the figures refer to voters in Wales, they refer to the percentage of people who were on the register for local elections in Wales.

Age

- Only 16% of 16-17 year olds in Great Britain were registered
- 70% of 18-34 year olds in England were registered
- 76% of 18-34 year olds in Scotland were registered
- 79% of 18-34 year olds in Wales were registered

Nationality

- 70% of EU citizens in Great Britain were registered
- 68% of Commonwealth Citizens were registered
- 58% of EU and Commonwealth citizens in Scotland were registered
- 70% of EU and Commonwealth citizens in Wales were registered

Ethnicity

- Registration in Great Britain is highest among those from a white ethnic background
- Since 2019, registration rates have increased for every group except those from Black ethnic backgrounds where it has fallen from 75% to 72%

Table 1: Registration across Great Britain

Year	2018	2022
White	84%	87%

Asian	76%	80%
Black	75%	72%
Mixed	69%	72%
Other	62%	71%

Disability, particularly non-physical disabilities

- 84% of people with a mental or learning disability in Great Britain were not registered

Socio-economic status

- 81% of people from the lowest-income socio-economic group (DE) in England were registered, compared to 89% the highest (AB).
- 78% of people from the lowest-income socio-economic group (DE) in Scotland were registered to vote in local elections, compared to 86% the highest (AB).
- 85% of people from the lowest-income socio-economic group (DE) in Wales were registered to vote in local elections, compared to 87% the highest (AB).

Housing, particularly if they rent privately

- Those who have recently moved house are less likely to be registered
- Only 39% of people in Great Britain who have lived at their current address for less than 1 year are registered
- 66% of people in England who rent their homes privately are registered compared to 45% in Scotland and 73% in Wales. By contrast, 95% of people in Great Britain who own their home outright are registered.

People with mental health challenges

- Like other groups such as disabled people who are vulnerable to social and political exclusion, we are concerned that people with a mental illness may also be under-registered. Research (UKRI, 2024) suggests that more than 500,000 people are living with a severe mental illness (SMI) in England, with more than 1.85 million people in contact with mental health, learning disability and autism services at the end of November 2023. Research (Centre for Mental Health, 2024) found that “difficulties or confusion around registering to vote” was indeed a barrier for people with mental health difficulties.

Other barriers to participation

We know that some groups are more likely to experience barriers created by the voter ID requirement and may need support to access photo ID required to vote in person at some UK elections. This includes:

- Older people, particularly those over 85
- Trans and non-binary people
- Disabled people
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Homeless people and those in refuges

We are particularly interested in supporting organisations that work with low socio-economic communities. Research carried out during the 2024 UK Parliament general election suggests that the voter ID requirement affected some people more than others. People from lower social grades who did not vote were more likely to say it was because they did not have any accepted ID than those in a higher social grade.

In addition to uncertainty about registering to vote, we also know that people with mental health difficulties face a range of other barriers to participation including:

- Confusion around rules about voter photo ID
- Lack of trust in or uncertainty around postal or proxy voting options
- Negative past experiences of not feeling understood or supported by staff at polling stations.