
STATES OF JERSEY



REFERENDUM COMMISSION: DESIGNATION OF LEAD CAMPAIGN GROUPS

**Presented to the States on 10th February 2026
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee**

STATES GREFFE

REPORT

Introduction

1. The Referendum Commission (the “Commission”) was established by the [Referendum \(Jersey\) Law 2017](#) (the “Law”). The Commission's principal functions under the Law are –
 - a. to advise on the proposed wording of the question in any prospective referendum; and
 - b. to appoint the lead campaign groups in respect of any such referendum.
2. The Law provides some ancillary functions to the Commission and the States Assembly can also confer functions on the Commission via the Act which the Assembly has to adopt for a referendum to be held.
3. On 30th April 2019, the Privileges and Procedures Committee presented a report of the Commission in relation to the holding of referendums in Jersey. This report was subsequently updated in February 2026. It largely focuses on providing an understanding of the main issues involved in deciding whether and how a referendum should take place with a suggested ‘code of good practice’. However, the report does not specifically address the issue of how the Commission would approach its task of selecting lead campaign groups.
4. This report therefore sets out how the Commission will approach the selection of lead campaign groups. It is intended that this Report be considered alongside the Commission’s updated report of 10th February 2026. The Commission may be contacted via referendumcommission@gov.je

Designation of Lead Campaign Groups

5. In accordance with Article 3(1) of the Law, one of the principal functions of the Commission is to designate the lead campaign groups for a referendum. The word ‘group’ is widely drafted under the Law and can include companies, trade unions, political parties, associations and partnerships.
6. If the Assembly decides to hold a referendum, the Commission must issue a notice inviting groups to apply for designation as the lead campaign group for each of the outcomes of the referendum.
7. The Commission welcomes all applications, including from groups working together.
8. The selection of lead campaign groups is a statutory role of the Commission. It is mandatory for the Commission to make a decision in relation to the selection of lead campaign groups based on what it considers to be the relevant criteria.

9. In determining the lead campaign group for an outcome from the referendum, the Commission must select the group which appears to the Commission to be **likely to be able to represent to the greatest extent those who support the outcome for which that group is designated.**
10. However, it should be noted that if only one of the outcomes of the referendum has a suitable lead campaign group, the Commission is not permitted to appoint a lead campaign group for either or any outcome. In those circumstances, there would be no lead campaign groups for the referendum in question and the referendum would proceed without them.

The Designation Period

11. Once the States Assembly determines to hold a referendum, the Commission will implement a window within which groups can apply to become lead campaign groups (“Phase One”). Dependent on time constraints, the Commission will aim for that window to be at least 21 days in duration. However, under the Law, there must be at least a 3-month gap between the Assembly’s adoption of an Act that a referendum be held and the referendum taking place. The timetable for Phase One, and subsequent phases, will therefore ultimately be determined in accordance with the date for the referendum set by the Assembly.
12. Following the end of Phase One, the Commission will then make its designation decision (“Phase Two”). Again, depending on any timing constraints or requests for further evidence from applicant groups, the Commission would aim to do so within a further 21 days of the end of Phase One.
13. Following the end of Phase Two, the lead campaign groups will be designated and will then liaise with the Commission about the publication of campaign material in advance of the referendum polling day (“Phase Three”). Phase Three will continue until the conclusion of the referendum process.

Process of Appointing Lead Campaign Groups

14. The appointment of lead campaign groups will take place during the first two phases of the designation period. The Commission considers that the appointment of lead campaign groups will involve three stages.
15. The Commission will approach this process fairly and independently without external influence or pressure. The Commission operates independently of the States Assembly and of the Government of Jersey.
16. The first stage, having invited applications, will be to assess whether each applicant has given sufficient information to enable the Commission to decide

if the applicant adequately represents those campaigning for their chosen referendum outcome.

17. If the answer to the above question is no, the Commission may seek further evidence from the applicant group. This could include interviews with representatives from that applicant group.
18. The second stage, having received all the relevant information, will be to determine whether each applicant adequately represents those campaigning for the outcome.
19. The third stage will be where there is more than one applicant for each outcome of the referendum outcome, in which event it will be necessary for the Commission to determine which applicant represents to the greatest extent those campaigning for the outcome.
20. A flowchart setting out the process to be adopted by the Commission is at Appendix 1.

Application to become a Lead Campaign Group

21. To apply to become a lead campaign group, the applicant group will need to complete an application form to be published by the Commission and will be expected to address the following matter areas –
 - a. The group's objectives and how they fit with the referendum outcome which is supported.
 - b. The breadth of support amongst campaigners for the appointment of them as lead campaign group (to include details and statements from those who support the application).
 - c. Where applicable, how the group plans to represent other campaigners for the same outcome and how the applicant would engage with those other campaigners.
 - d. How the group intends to convey its campaign message across the Island, including how communications will be addressed to different groups taking into account age, those with disabilities, ethnic communities and those who do not have English as their first language.
 - e. How the group intends on delivering its campaign objectives, including how it plans to fund the campaign.
 - f. The names, skills and experience of key group members.
 - g. Any other information in support of the application, including the applicant group's understanding of the Law and its provisions relating to lead campaign groups.

22. The Commission invites applicant groups to provide the information as succinctly as possible with relevant evidence attached to the application. If interviews are held, questioning will be based upon the criteria in the checklist above.
23. A record of all applications for lead campaign groups shall be published by the Commission in the interests of fairness and transparency, with the exception of contact details and any other personal data that would not be suitable for publication. This mirrors the process in the UK, where such applications are published.
24. The application form to apply to be a lead campaign group will be published following the decision by the States Assembly to hold a referendum.

Publication of Campaign Material

25. The Commission must make arrangements for campaign material provided to it by a lead campaign group to be published. The material must summarise the lead campaign group's case for the outcome for which it is designated.
26. The Commission recommends that information is contained in a pamphlet or leaflet for ease of distribution. In general terms, the Commission will, unless otherwise advised, only publish material from lead campaign groups which is no more than two sides of A4 paper in length. Specific formatting requirements will be provided by the Commission upon the selection of lead campaign groups. Lead campaign groups will be expected to have considered voters from different sectors of the population (for instance, in terms of age, voters with disabilities, voters who do not have English as their first language).
27. Publication of the material provided by lead campaign groups will be undertaken both digitally (on Vote.je) and in hard copy for distribution by post to Jersey households.

Campaign Spending

28. The Commission will expect any group seeking appointment as a lead campaign group to be familiar with the provisions of the Law and to confirm that they have considered it. In particular, lead campaign groups will be expected to understand Part 4 of the Law in relation to Campaign Spending. The Commission will not appoint any group as a lead campaign group unless and until written confirmation in this respect has been provided by the applicant group.
29. Of particular note is that there are set limits within the Law for the expenditure of lead campaign groups and that exceeding those limits is an offence and liable to a fine.

Appendix 1 – Process of Appointing Lead Campaign Groups

