

# Candidate Contribution Tool

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **SIGN-UP / GETTING STARTED**

#### **1. What is the NYC Votes app?**

The NYC Votes app aims to transform the experience of voting and civic engagement for New Yorkers by providing access to voting and election information via mobile devices. The first phase of the app is the NYC Votes Candidate Contribution Tool, which is available to all candidates running for mayor, public advocate, comptroller, borough president, and City Council. The Contribution Tool is aimed at simplifying the processes of accepting credit card contributions and documenting those contributions on behalf of your campaign to the New York City Campaign Finance Board (CFB).

#### **2. How do I sign up for the NYC Votes app?**

To use the NYC Votes Candidate Contribution Tool, you must be a [registered candidate](#) with the CFB. Campaigns must set up an account using the candidate's or treasurer's email address provided to the CFB on the Filer Registration or Certification form. To begin accepting contributions you will also need to set up a credit card processing account with Stripe Payments.

#### **3. What is Stripe Payments?**

Stripe Payments is a full-service merchant services provider that enables campaigns to accept credit card contributions through the NYC Votes app. Stripe processes payments received via credit card online or on a mobile device, allowing your campaign to solicit contributions. For more detailed, step-by-step instructions, please refer to the [Stripe Payments Sign-Up Instructions](#).

#### **4. Does the NYC Votes app or Stripe require a campaign to have a separate merchant account?**

The Candidate Contribution Tool does **not** require a separate merchant account through a bank in order to be able to accept credit card contributions. The app connects to your campaign's Stripe account, which serves as both a merchant account and a credit card processor. Stripe deposits funds directly to your campaign's designated bank account, net of fees.

#### **5. Does Stripe charge processing fees?**

When you accept credit card contributions with Stripe, you pay a fee of 2.9% + 30¢ per successful charge. For each contribution, Stripe withholds the fees and deposits the remainder in your designated campaign bank account. You can find more information about Stripe's pricing [on Stripe's support site](#).

#### **6. Are there other fees related to accepting credit card contributions?**

Stripe has no setup fees, no monthly fees, no validation fees, no refund fees, and no card storage fees. There's also no charge for failed payments.

#### **7. What security features does the NYC Votes app have in place?**

Financial data, including credit card information, is stored with Stripe Payments, which is certified as a PCI Level 1 Service Provider. See information about Stripe's security features [on Stripe's support site](#). Additional data collected through the app and stored for compliance purposes is SSL encrypted, and the app itself is securely hosted. More information about NYC Votes' server host security can be found [on Heroku's security policy site](#).

## **8. Does the NYC Votes Candidate Contribution Tool store my financial information?**

All of your campaign's financial information, including the sign-up information you provide to Stripe, is stored securely with Stripe and only with Stripe. NYC Votes retains only the very basic information about each contributor and each contribution that enables your campaign to complete your public disclosure reporting to the CFB.

## **9. What campaign information should I have ready to sign up for a Stripe account?**

After you've set up your campaign's NYC Votes account, the app will prompt you to sign up for an account with Stripe. To do this, you must have the following campaign information handy:

- Campaign bank account number and bank routing number
- Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS
- Candidate's identity verification information (date of birth, social security number)

To comply with federal law, Stripe requires that a customer provide some proof of identity, including — as is common on most merchant account applications — an individual's social security number and date of birth. We recommend you use the candidate's personal information for your campaign's application. Stripe's website has a clear and helpful explanation of why it requires this information, which you can find [on Stripe's support site](#). Neither the NYC Votes app nor the CFB stores or has access to any of this information.

## **USING THE APP**

### **10. How do I use the app once I've created an NYC Votes account?**

Once you have created an NYC Votes account and signed up for a Stripe Payments account through NYC Votes, you may begin soliciting contributions using your mobile device.

### **11. How do I add the NYC Votes app shortcut to my mobile device?**

On an Apple iPhone or iPad, follow these [directions](#).

On a Windows phone or tablet, follow these [directions](#).

On an Android phone or tablet, watch this [YouTube video](#).

### **12. Which members of my campaign can use the NYC Votes app to collect contributions?**

At this time, only the candidate or treasurer who sets up the NYC Votes account and Stripe account for your campaign may collect contributions.

### **13. Will members of the public be able to make contributions to my campaign through the NYC Votes app on their own?**

With the release of the NYC Votes Voter Engagement Tool later this year, voters will be able to make contributions to your campaign directly via their own mobile device if you have previously created accounts with the Candidate Contribution Tool and Stripe Payments.

### **14. Can I embed the Contribution Tool on my campaign's website?**

An embeddable link is not currently available. The initial version of the Candidate Contribution Tool is only available for use by candidates to raise funds in-person. As the tool is updated and the public is invited to use the NYC Votes app, a link for your campaign website may be made available.

## **15. Will NYC Votes help me with the CFB's public disclosure requirements?**

The Candidate Contribution Tool helps by collecting the contributor information the CFB requires for compliance and disclosure purposes including employment information, “doing business” status, and the contribution affirmations required by law.

The Candidate Contribution Tool uses that information to generate reports that will assist you with compliance and reporting. Under the ‘Finance’ tab in the app’s ‘Account’ page, you can generate and download detailed reports for your campaign about the contributions you receive through the app. The app also produces backup documentation with the information necessary for the CFB to determine the status of claims for public matching funds. You are then responsible for submitting these backup documents to the CFB.

At this time, campaigns are responsible for entering their contribution information into C-SMART, the CFB’s online financial reporting software. In the future, you will be able to generate and download reports in .CSV spreadsheet format to import directly into C-SMART and other political fundraising platforms that accept .CSV file imports.

## **16. Must I submit backup documentation for contributions collected through the NYC Votes app?**

Yes. As a candidate, it is always your responsibility to ensure your campaign is in compliance with the Act and Rules. You must submit backup documentation for contributions received through the Candidate Contribution Tool in the same way you submit backup for all other contributions claimed for match. In the ‘Your Account’ section of the Candidate Contribution Tool, you can request a Backup Documentation report be emailed to you, which contains proof of processing information for all credit card contributions received through the app. This report must then be annotated with C-SMART transaction ID numbers before being submitted to the CFB with your disclosure statement. (For information on submitting backup documentation to the CFB using Google Drive, consult the CFB’s guidance on [Electronic Submission of Backup Documentation](#).)

## **17. Does the app only accept matchable contributions?**

No, the app can receive out-of-city and non-matchable contributions from any legal contributor. It is the campaign’s responsibility to decide which contributions to claim for match, and to report all contributions correctly, using C-SMART. Matching claims must be accompanied by appropriate backup documentation.

## **18. Will the app allow the contributor to submit a contribution if not all fields are completed?**

The Candidate Contribution Tool will prompt your contributors for all the information required for compliance with CFB requirements for collecting and documenting contributions by credit card. Each required field must be completed for a successful transaction to take place.

## **STRIPE / CREDIT CARD PROCESSING**

### **19. How do I reset my Stripe account password?**

You can reset your Stripe account password right from [Stripe’s reset password page](#).

### **20. Does the NYC Votes app employ Address Verification System (AVS)?**

Yes. A successful AVS check is a CFB requirement for each credit card contribution to be matched with public funds. (For more information, see the CFB’s [Credit Card Guidance Document](#).) The Candidate Contribution Tool, through Stripe Payments, verifies a contributor’s address using a real-time check of AVS once a contribution is submitted. If AVS fails, the contributor will be prompted immediately to correct any mistakes in the information he or she provided. Transactions will not be processed or

completed unless the contributor's billing address matches the address on file with the contributor's credit card issuer. You may still receive questions from the CFB about contributions received through the Candidate Contribution Tool, but required checks like these should minimize the need to request further information.

## **21. Does the contributor receive confirmation that their contribution has been processed?**

The contributor can opt to receive a confirmation of his/her contribution by tapping the "Email Confirmation" button that appears once the transaction has been completed. To enable automatic receipts, follow these steps found on [Stripe's blog](#).

## **22. How can I initiate refunds to contributors?**

For general refunds, Stripe Payments has a very easy-to-use interface that allows campaigns to return money to contributors if you choose to refund a contribution. More information can be found [on Stripe's support site](#).

For prohibited contributions (*i.e.* corporate contributions, over-the-limit contributions), refunds must be made with a certified bank check and you will have to provide documentation. See the CFB's [guidance on prohibited contributions](#) for more information.

## **23. How do I know if a contribution went through?**

Your Stripe account allows you to receive email notifications for each successful transaction. See Stripe's [support site](#) for more information.

## **24. Where can I see a list of my contributions by date/time? Where can I find a history of all transfers that have taken place from Stripe to my bank account?**

Stripe provides an easy-to-use dashboard with information about the transactions you accept through the Candidate Contribution Tool. For more information see Stripe's [reporting FAQ](#).

## **25. How long does it take for contributions to be deposited in my committee bank account?**

It may take up to seven days for a payment received through the Candidate Contribution Tool to be deposited in your designated bank account. For more information visit Stripe's [payment FAQ](#).

Questions related to payments and transactions can be answered by Stripe Payments' [Help & Support](#) feature or by [logging into your campaign's Stripe account](#).

## **HELP CONTACTS:**

For questions regarding committee registration, public disclosure, and compliance with the Campaign Finance Act or CFB Rules, contact the Candidate Services Unit at 212-409-1800 or [CSUmail@nyccfb.info](mailto:CSUmail@nyccfb.info). You may also contact your designated CSU Liaison directly.

For questions regarding the NYC Votes app, glitches, errors, or to submit feedback, write us at [feedback@nycvotes.org](mailto:feedback@nycvotes.org)

For questions regarding payments, review Stripe's [Help & Support](#) feature. Stripe can be contacted [through their website](#) or at [support@stripe.com](mailto:support@stripe.com).

For free assistance setting up your mobile device with the NYC Votes Candidate Contribution Tool, call [Tekserve](#) at (212) 929-3645 and set up an appointment with one of their specialists.