

Policy title			
Audience (Primary)	External	Business Owner (Dept)	Community Development
Policy Author	Community Funding Coordinator	Review Date	2027

Whangarei District Council

*Community Funding
Pūtea a Hapori*

*Policy
#031*

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Purpose

The purpose of the Community Funding Policy is to guide the allocation and management of Council's community grants and loans. It outlines Council's drivers, objectives, and approach to providing support to the community.

The overall objective of the Community Funding Policy is to support effective delivery of the community funding programme to meet the needs of four groups of stakeholders, being:

- **Groups and organisations seeking financial support**, who require clear guidance about Council's intentions and priorities for funding, fair and equitable grants processes, and upfront information about their obligations if they receive a grant.
- **Elected members**, who are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the grants programme in a way that best meets the needs of the community, addresses the priorities they have collectively set, and delivers good value for ratepayers.
- **Council staff**, who need a clear framework within which to work to provide high quality service and advice, stewardship of grant funds, evaluation of their impact and benefit, and effectively deliver the community funding programme.
- **Whangarei residents**, who fund through their rates the community support the council provides, and who receive the benefit of the activities we fund on their behalf.

This Policy was previously titled the Grants, Concessions and Loans Policy.

Definitions

Grants	Financial support for specific community endeavours, made following an open, transparent, contestable process.
Contestable	Where a fixed amount of money is available that applicants can compete for a portion of.

Not for Profit	Any society, association or organisation that is not carried on for the profit or gain of any individual member/s, and whose rules or objects state that any money earned or donated is used in pursuing the organisation's objectives for community good.
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Scope

This Policy relates to Council's community funding mechanisms, which includes all contestable and non-contestable grants and the community loans scheme.

Out of scope is support provided from time to time via other council functions, including:

- Rates rebates, remissions, and postponements
- Koha given in specific cultural situations and settings
- Alternative funding programmes such as the Event Development Fund to support objectives in line with the Whangārei Events Strategy, and the Waste Minimisation Fund to support objectives in line with the Whangareai District Waste Management and Minimisation Plan
- Agreements with community groups undertaking activities on behalf of Council who holds the responsibility for those activities, such as mowing of Council-owned grounds, and cleaning of public toilets
- Third party support where Council is a partner in delivering funds on behalf of other agencies, such as the Creative Communities Scheme and Kai Ora Fund
- Community support approved through Annual Plan or Long Term Plan mechanisms
- Support provided to Council Controlled Organisations or other community organisations with which Council has a strategic relationship
- Incentives and concessions relating to the lease of council-owned property.

Strategic alignment

The community funding programme supports Council's Community Outcomes and vision for the district as described in the Long Term Plan (LTP). The programme supports the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of our communities.

It also aligns with and supports several Council strategies and policies, including:

- Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy – He Rautaki Toi a Rohe o Whangarei
- Active Recreation and Sport Strategy
- Community Halls Strategy
- Youth Policy
- Positive Ageing Policy
- Accessibility Policy
- Whangārei Events Strategy
- Te Kārearea strategic partnership principles.

Community Development Framework

The community funding programme is aligned to and supports the outcomes we seek to achieve through the Community Development Framework:

- Develop capability and capacity in our communities
- Encourage and enable Community-led initiatives
- Partner with others for broader impact
- Targeted and meaningful use of resources
- Promote a community-centred approach across Council.

Valuing Te Ao Māori and enabling Māori outcomes

Council is committed to upholding the Mana of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and to developing stronger relationships with tangata whenua. Te Kārearea is the strategic partnership forum between hapū of Whangarei working through Te Huinga and Council.

This policy aligns with Te Kārearea's vision: *He Whenua Rangatira – Whangarei, district of prosperity, well-being and empowered communities.*

In the context of this policy, our commitment means that:

- We acknowledge the special role and significance of Māori as tangata whenua
- We recognise that support to eligible kaupapa Māori organisations is an important way to realise Māori aspirations
- We will engage effectively with Māori to promote funding opportunities available through council, such as through Te Huinga, Te Karearea, and existing networks and platforms
- We will obtain where necessary a Te Ao Māori perspective to assess applications which seek to deliver outcomes for or by Māori
- Our support is appropriately recognised in funding decisions which demonstrate equitable funding support for tangata whenua.

Our approach

The community funding programme is delivered in accordance with Council's tikanga, Community Outcomes, and our community funding principles.

Community funding principles

We apply our community funding principles in policy and in practice when delivering our community funding programme. Our principles are:

Effective	We are effective and responsive, providing support in a timely, effective and responsible manner so our community can deliver their mahi successfully for the benefit of the district.
Equitable	We seek to provide an equitable division of support across our diverse communities of people, place, and interest.
Consistent	We are consistent and fair in the delivery of funding opportunities, including ensuring all eligible organisations can compete for the same support.
Transparent	We ensure our approach, criteria, processes, consideration, and decision- making are clear, open, publicly available and can stand up to scrutiny.
Flexible	We are flexible, adaptable, and agile supporting community when, how, and where it is seeks our support.
Inclusive	We support programmes, services, facilities, and activities that are inclusive or enable equitable outcomes for all our communities of place, people, and attribute.

Management of the funding programme

Staff are to:

- manage the funding programme in line with this Policy,
- set budgets to guide allocations and ensure funds are not expended before year end,
- walk alongside applicants to complete applications and progress these once complete,
- deliver outcomes within four months for completed applications, and
- report regularly to the Community Development Committee of Council.

Our priorities

Funding priorities

The community funding programme has four priority areas. Eligible applications will meet at least one of these priorities. Funding allocations should aim for an equal spread across all four priorities.

- **Arts, Culture and Heritage** – To support and celebrate the history, language, culture, and art of our diverse communities.
- **Recreation and Sport** – To support and deliver a variety of recreation and sporting opportunities for all ages, abilities, and life stages.
- **Environment** – To support making a positive difference to our environment, enable kaitiakitanga of our taiao, raise environmental awareness, and support resilience to climate change impacts.
- **Community Wellbeing** – To support initiatives that enable equitable outcomes, raise community resilience, participation, and connection, and help create safe, healthy, thriving communities.

Community Outcomes

Eligible applications will also demonstrate alignment with at least one of Council's Community Outcomes:

- A thriving local identity
- A sustainable and resilient future
- A diverse and inclusive culture
- A great place to call home.

Eligibility

General eligibility

- Eligible applicants:
- Have a constitution or trust deed
- Have a bank account in the group's name
- Have held an AGM with elections recently in line with its rules
- Exist for not-for-profit purposes
- Are located within and provide benefit to the Whangarei District

Community organisations that do not have these elements would need to apply under the auspices of an organisation that meets this eligibility.

For our youth funding, Whangarei-based individuals aged 12-24 are eligible to apply, with endorsement of an appropriately aligned organisation such as their school, church, youth group, sports club, or other entity the individual is associated with or known by.

School boards are eligible if the request is primarily for the benefit of the wider community and not part of the school programme of activities.

Religious organisations are eligible if the request is primarily for the benefit of the wider community and does not promote any one ideology.

Political organisations are not eligible.

All previous grant obligations must be met before further applications can be considered. Applications can include up to three projects within the maximum allowable grant range.

Specific funding criteria - facilities

- The maximum allowable allocation for facilities development is \$100,000 for all new builds, renovations, and maintenance. Applicants can apply for this amount for each stage of the project, subject to previous grant obligations having been met.

- Applicants can apply for up to \$2,000 for facility running costs for all community facilities that earn less than \$5,000 in rental income.
- Building insurance is a requirement to be eligibility for funding over \$10,000 for facilities.
- Milestone reporting is required for all facilities funding over \$75,000 and funding may be held by Council until requirements are met.

Specific funding criteria – general applications

- The maximum allowable allocation for non-facilities related applications is \$20,000.
- Applicants can only apply for the amount to meet their funding gap.
- Community Associations (resident and ratepayer groups and marae trusts) as identified by Council are eligible to receive \$750 per year subject to demonstrating continued good governance and community advocacy.

Co-funding

In general, Council will only fund up to 70% of a project or event cost where the applicant is requesting over \$10,000. Applications that demonstrate readiness by way of having a tangible, financial contribution of 30% may be prioritised for support.

Ineligible applications

The community funding programme will not support:

- debt servicing, gambling or prize money, travel costs, conference fees, costs related to fines or disputes
- uniforms, trophies, or awards
- the purchase of vehicles,
- merchandise or branding, including t-shirts (PPE or similar kit is eligible)

- retrospective expenses incurred, or expenses committed to before funding decisions are made
- activities or projects:
 - that occur outside of the Whangarei district boundary
 - where the primary purpose is religious, political, or commercial activity
 - it considers the responsibility of central government or other agencies initiatives that Council has obligation to support, regardless of priorities or budget
 - that start before funding decisions are made
 - that are self-funding or for fundraising purposes
 - applicants it has significant concerns with, financial or otherwise
 - applicants who have not completed their obligations for prior funding received
 - organisations that can fund the initiative themselves
 - organisations from outside of the Whangarei district boundary that do not have a clear relationship to the Whangarei district.

Council's discretion

The Community Development Committee of Council may, in rare circumstances, support applications and organisations outside of these criteria where there is clear community benefit that outweighs any negative impact of going outside of this Policy, while continuing to use ratepayer funds responsibly.

Application, assessment, and approval process

Support for applicants

Council staff will provide advice and support for applicants with language, literacy or other access needs to ensure equitable access to Council's support, whenever possible.

Applying for funding

All requests for support from Council must be made on the relevant application form.

Supporting documents are required for an application to be considered complete. This includes (but is not limited to) quotes, financial statements, and sufficient information for staff to make an appropriate decision or recommendation.

Assessment

Staff assess each application based on:

- eligibility and alignment with Council's funding priorities and criteria
- alignment with Council's strategies and policies
- the strength of the proposal and budget
- the community benefits expected from the initiative
- the readiness of the applicant and ability to deliver
- the level of risk to Council and the community
- available budget and funding priority allocations
- providing equitable outcomes for all our communities
- previous or practiced levels of support for the type of activity for which funding is sought
- advice from subject-matter experts, and
- professional insight.

As demand for Council's support typically exceeds the available budget, staff may apply further prioritisation to deliver consistent, fair, and equitable outcomes.

Decision-making

Funding decisions are final and cannot be contested, however applicants can apply again

in future.

Council may withhold the payment of grants allocated until evidence is provided of meeting grant conditions or project milestones.

Grants not claimed within the specific timeframe may be revoked.

Council may seek funds to be returned where grant terms and conditions have not been met.

Declaring potential conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest may exist where any elected member, council staff member, or immediate family member of either, has any interest or involvement in the project or activity proposed for Council's support.

These must be declared by applicants on their application form, and by staff and elected members at the relevant committee meeting where the request for funding will be discussed.

Council's Standing Orders (procedures for the conduct of meetings) outline how potential conflicts of interest will be managed.

Recipient responsibilities

Receiving funding

Recipients of funding must:

- provide a tax invoice to Whangarei District Council for the grant amount within the timeframe specified
- acknowledge Whangarei District Council in all publicity
- spend the grant on the purpose for which the application was made within 12 months of funding being approved

- return any unspent money to Whangarei District Council if the project is cancelled or completed under budget
- meet any additional terms and conditions that may be set by Whangarei District Council
- submit a satisfactory grant accountability report at the completion of the project
- keep all invoices and receipts accounting for the full amount of the grant or loan for 12 months and provide these if requested.
- return any monies granted should any breach of the above conditions occur.

Council will only pay grants into the bank account of the named applicant or their nominated umbrella organisation and upon receipt of a valid tax invoice.

Grant accountability reports

Reporting on the use and impact of funding received is required for most funding allocated. Reporting requirements and due dates are advised in the grant confirmation letter. Copies of invoices and other supporting information is required for most grant reports.

Council may withhold future funding or request funding to be returned if reports are overdue, incomplete or indicate funds received were not used as intended.

In some instances, staff may waive the need for a full report, such as if the grant is under \$1,000 or is for ongoing operational expenditure.

Complaint procedure

Concerns about the delivery of the funding programme or decisions made can be raised with the Department Manager Community Development and/or the General Manager Community. Funding decisions are final.

Terms and conditions

This policy outlines the terms in which Council will provide support through the community funding programme and the obligations of those receiving that support. Council may impose additional terms and conditions if required.

The terms and conditions of receiving support from Council are stated in the grant confirmation letter and are deemed accepted when a recipient presents an invoice to Council or otherwise accepts any payment made.

Community loans require a formal loan agreement to be executed.

Adopted

Policy Review

This Policy was reviewed in 2024 and this revised Policy was updated as follows:

Date of meeting: 20 June 2024

By: Community Development Committee